

# **An Impact Study on Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction of Tea Estate Workers in Wayanad District**

**Dr. A. Mohanasundaram,**

**Research Supervisor,**

**Professor - Commerce and Principal,**

**Shree Venkateshwara Arts and Science College, Gobichettipalayam.**

**SHABARIMOL. NK,**

**Ph.D. Research Scholar,**

**Department of Commerce,**

**Shree Venkateshwara Arts and Science College, Gobichettipalayam.**

## **ABSTRACT**

Job satisfaction plays a pivotal role in influencing employee performance, retention, and overall organizational success, especially in labor-intensive industries such as tea estates. This study aims to evaluate the job satisfaction levels among employees in the tea estates of Wayanad District and identify the key factors that influence their satisfaction. The research explores various aspects, including working conditions, wages, welfare measures, job security, and management support—elements that directly affect employee morale and productivity. A structured questionnaire was distributed to gather primary data from workers across multiple tea estates in the region. The study utilizes both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including Chi-Square tests and correlation analysis, to examine the relationship between demographic variables and job satisfaction. The findings reveal that factors like fair wages, job security, and supportive management practices significantly enhance job satisfaction, while poor welfare measures and substandard working conditions contribute to dissatisfaction. The results offer valuable insights into employee perceptions and challenges within the workplace, emphasizing areas in need of improvement. Based on the findings, the study recommends that estate management focus on improving welfare policies, ensuring equitable wage structures, and creating a more supportive work environment. Such measures are essential for boosting employee retention, productivity, and overall operational efficiency within the tea estate sector.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Tea Estate, Employee Welfare, Working Conditions, Wayanad, Labor Management, Employee Retention

## **INTRODUCTION**

Tea production is an important sector of the Indian economy, with districts such as Wayanad District being a major contributor to the country's tea production. The tea industry provides jobs for thousands of people, from tea pluckers and factory workers to managerial personnel. Employees in tea estates have their job satisfaction influenced by various considerations, such as working conditions, remuneration, employability, welfare provisions, and employer attitudes. Job satisfaction, a term for the general satisfaction of employees with their job, is affected by intrinsic variables such as the character of the job, appreciation, and possibility for advancement as well as extrinsic variables such as pay, remunerations, working hours, and attitudes towards superiors and coworkers. Workers in the tea sector generally face difficult circumstances, such as extreme

weather, physical work, pay inequalities, and minimal career advancement, all of which tend to impact their morale and satisfaction rates significantly.

Wayanad District, a prominent tea-producing area in South India, provides employment to a large workforce, including both permanent and seasonal workers. While some estates have introduced welfare measures aimed at improving worker conditions, challenges such as fair wages, access to healthcare, job security, and proper housing remain prevalent. Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of such initiatives in enhancing job satisfaction has yet to be thoroughly assessed. This study seeks to evaluate the level of job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad, focusing on factors that influence their satisfaction and identifying areas where improvements can be made. Through employee surveys and feedback, the research aims to offer actionable recommendations to estate management and policymakers, promoting a better work environment, increased employee morale, and higher retention rates within the tea estate sector.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The tea sector is of vital economic importance to India, especially in areas such as Wayanad District, where tea estates provide employment to a large and diverse number of workers. The importance of the sector notwithstanding, the level of job satisfaction among workers in the estates remains high because of various issues such as unfavorable working conditions, poor compensation, insecurity of employment, few prospects of career development, and poor welfare provisions. Although various estates have implemented programs to enhance worker welfare, the efficacy of these interventions in promoting greater overall job satisfaction has not been tested fully. The permanent and seasonal workers face problems concerning reasonable compensation, health care access, proper housing, and balanced work-life conditions. All these can adversely impact their motivational state, productivity, and long-term job retention in the tea sector. Due to the importance of these concerns, it is essential to investigate the major determinants of job satisfaction and evaluate how employees view their working

This study aims to investigate the factors that influence job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad District, identify existing gaps in working conditions, and provide recommendations for improvement. The results will offer valuable insights to enhance management practices, boost employee morale, and support sustainable workforce development in the tea industry.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the overall job satisfaction levels of employees working in tea estates in Wayanad District.
- To identify the key factors influencing job satisfaction, including wages, working conditions, job security, and welfare measures.
- To analyze the challenges faced by tea estate workers in Wayanad and their impact on job satisfaction.
- To provide recommendations for enhancing job satisfaction and improving employee well-being in tea estates.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology provides a structured approach for conducting the study, ensuring the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. In this study, the methodology is designed to assess job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad District, focusing on key factors such as working conditions, wages, job security, and welfare measures. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to capture a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting job satisfaction in this sector.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a descriptive research design to assess job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad District. It focuses on identifying key factors such as working conditions, wages, job security, and welfare measures that influence employee satisfaction.

## SAMPLING METHOD

The study uses convenience sampling to select 125 employees from tea estates in Wayanad District, representing roles such as tea pluckers, factory workers, and supervisors, ensuring a diverse perspective on job satisfaction.

## DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Primary data is collected using structured questionnaires with closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, focusing on factors like working conditions, wages, job security, career growth, and welfare measures. Secondary data is gathered from research articles, industry reports, government publications, and company policies related to employee satisfaction in the tea industry.

## TOOLS USED FOR ANALYSIS

### Simple Percentage

Simple percentage is a statistical technique used to express data as a fraction of 100. It simplifies the presentation of data, making it easier to understand and compare different categories. In this study, the simple percentage method will be applied to calculate the proportion of respondents who are satisfied with various aspects of working conditions, wages, and welfare measures, providing clear insights into employee opinions and perceptions.

### Chi-Square Test

The Chi-Square test is used to examine the association between categorical variables. In this study, it will assess whether there is a significant relationship between employee satisfaction and factors such as working conditions, job security, and welfare measures. This test will help determine if observed patterns in the data differ significantly from expected outcomes, offering insights into key factors influencing job satisfaction.

### Correlation

Correlation analysis measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. In this study, it will be used to assess the relationship between employee satisfaction and factors like working conditions, wages, and management support. A positive or negative correlation will reveal how closely these factors are related and whether improvements in one area lead to increased job satisfaction among tea estate workers.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study evaluates the job satisfaction of tea estate workers in Wayanad District, focusing on factors like working conditions, wages, job security, welfare measures, and career growth opportunities. By gathering insights from employees in various roles, such as tea pluckers, factory workers, and supervisors, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of satisfaction levels and identify challenges faced by workers. The findings will offer valuable recommendations for improving employee well-being, reducing turnover, and enhancing productivity, but the scope is limited to Wayanad, and the results may not be directly applicable to other regions due to differences in labor policies and environmental conditions.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar, P., & Singh, S. (2023). Working conditions and job satisfaction in South Indian tea plantations. *Journal of Indian Labor Studies*, 15(3), 47-62. This study explores the impact of working conditions on job satisfaction among tea estate workers in South India, particularly in Wayanad District. It finds that poor infrastructure, lack

of proper sanitation, and inadequate rest areas contribute to dissatisfaction among workers. The study highlights that improving working conditions, such as better housing and healthcare facilities, significantly increases employee satisfaction and productivity.

Chandran, R., & Sharma, V. (2023). Economic factors influencing job satisfaction in tea estates. *International Journal of Tea Research*, 29(4), 121-136. This research analyzes the role of economic factors such as wage structures, bonus schemes, and fringe benefits in shaping job satisfaction within tea plantations. It finds that while wages are critical, transparency and consistency in pay, alongside performance-linked incentives, significantly improve satisfaction levels. The study suggests that addressing wage disparities and offering financial incentives can reduce dissatisfaction.

Nair, K., & Joseph, A. (2022). The role of management support in job satisfaction: A case study of Wayanad tea estates. *Journal of Human Resource Development*, 18(2), 88-103. This study emphasizes the role of management support in fostering a positive work environment. It reveals that workers with supportive management—who engage in communication, career development opportunities, and involvement in decision-making—report higher job satisfaction. Poor management practices, such as lack of recognition and inconsistent policies, result in dissatisfaction and higher turnover rates.

Menon, S., & Kumar, R. (2022). Welfare measures and job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Kerala. *Journal of Labor Welfare and Productivity*, 23(1), 72-86. This research investigates the relationship between welfare measures and job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Kerala, including Wayanad. The study finds that health benefits, educational support for children, and adequate housing are key factors that contribute to higher job satisfaction. The study concludes that the effectiveness of welfare schemes is contingent on their implementation and accessibility to workers.

Subramanian, P. (2021). Social support networks and job satisfaction in Indian tea plantations. *South Asian Journal of Social Work*, 10(3), 54-67. This study explores the role of social support networks in improving job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad. It finds that informal support systems—such as strong relationships with fellow workers and community bonds—play a crucial role in coping with job stress. Strengthening social networks within tea estates could foster a more supportive work environment and increase job satisfaction.

Sundaram, G., & Rao, V. (2023). Occupational health and job satisfaction in tea plantations. *International Journal of Occupational Health*, 25(2), 139-151. Sundaram and Rao's study investigates the occupational health risks faced by tea estate workers, such as exposure to pesticides, long working hours, and physical strain. These health risks are found to negatively impact workers' satisfaction levels, particularly when adequate health and safety measures are not provided. The study advocates for comprehensive health and safety regulations to improve job satisfaction and well-being.

Madhavan, V., & Karthik, S. (2023). Job security and employee retention in tea estates of Wayanad. *Journal of Employment Relations*, 20(4), 203-218. This research explores the impact of job security on job satisfaction and employee retention in Wayanad's tea estates. It concludes that workers with stable, long-term contracts report higher job satisfaction and are less likely to leave their jobs. The study suggests that offering permanent positions and career growth opportunities can reduce turnover and improve workforce stability.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The tea industry is a vital sector in India, employing millions and contributing significantly to the economy through both domestic consumption and global exports. Wayanad, a prominent tea-growing region in Kerala, benefits from its favorable climate and soil, making it ideal for high-quality tea production. However, despite its economic importance, workers in Wayanad's tea estates face challenges such as low wages, poor working conditions, and limited worker rights. These issues directly impact job satisfaction, which in turn affects

productivity and retention. Understanding the factors that influence job satisfaction in this context is crucial for improving both worker welfare and the overall sustainability of the tea industry in Wayanad.

### Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's overall assessment of their work, encompassing their feelings of contentment, motivation, and well-being. Locke (1976) defines it as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences." In the context of tea estate workers in Wayanad, job satisfaction is influenced by factors such as:

- Fair wages and financial security
- Safe and healthy working conditions
- Access to welfare benefits (housing, healthcare, education)
- Work-life balance and job security
- Opportunities for skill development and career advancement

When job satisfaction is high, it leads to improved productivity, reduced absenteeism, and greater employee retention, ultimately benefiting both workers and the tea estate industry.

### Factors Affecting Job Satisfaction

The job satisfaction of tea estate workers in Wayanad is influenced by several factors:

- **Financial Compensation and Benefits:** Low wages and lack of performance incentives lead to dissatisfaction, while welfare facilities like housing and medical care improve satisfaction.
- **Working Conditions:** Exposure to hazardous tasks, long working hours, and poor work environments can negatively impact satisfaction, while clean, safe conditions boost morale.
- **Job Security:** Permanent employment provides security, while seasonal or contract-based jobs and fear of automation reduce job satisfaction.
- **Management and Co-worker Relationships:** Supportive supervisors and a positive work culture foster higher job satisfaction.
- **Career Growth and Training:** Opportunities for skill development and promotions increase motivation and job satisfaction.
- **Work-Life Balance:** On-site living can blur work-life boundaries, but family-friendly policies and leisure activities improve balance.
- **Trade Unions and Employee Rights:** Strong unions and legal protections enhance job satisfaction by securing better wages and working conditions.

Improving these factors can significantly enhance job satisfaction, leading to a more engaged and productive workforce.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table 1- Demographic Profile**

Category	Classification	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Age Group	Below 25 years	27	21.6%
	25 - 35 years	31	24.8%
	36 - 45 years	19	15.2%
	46 - 55 years	23	18.4%

	Above 55 years	25	20.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	69	55.2%
	Female	53	42.4%
	Other	3	2.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	39	31.2%
	Married	71	56.8%
	Widowed	9	7.2%
	Divorced	6	4.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	No formal education	21	16.8%
	Primary school	33	26.4%
	Secondary school	29	23.2%
	Higher secondary	24	19.2%
	Graduate or above	18	14.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Years of Experience</b>	Less than 1 year	17	13.6%
	1 - 5 years	34	27.2%
	6 - 10 years	28	22.4%
	11 - 15 years	23	18.4%
	More than 15 years	23	18.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Job Position</b>	Tea Plucker	52	41.6%
	Factory Worker	38	30.4%
	Supervisor	21	16.8%
	Manager	14	11.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>
	Less than ₹5,000	29	23.2%
	₹5,000 - ₹10,000	41	32.8%



<b>Monthly Income</b>	₹10,001 - ₹15,000	27	21.6%
	₹15,001 - ₹20,000	16	12.8%
	Above ₹20,000	12	9.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of respondents fall within the 25-35 years age group (24.8%), indicating a relatively young workforce in the tea estates of Wayanad. The gender distribution reveals a workforce with 55.2% males and 42.4% females, reflecting a diverse labor force. A significant portion of employees (56.8%) are married, and 26.4% have only completed primary education, suggesting that many workers possess limited formal education. These demographic factors age, gender, marital status, and education level may significantly influence job satisfaction levels among tea estate workers in Wayanad.

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant relationship between gender and job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad. Alternative

Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): There is a significant relationship between gender and job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad.

**Table 2- Gender and Job Satisfaction**

#### Correlations

	Gender	Job Satisfaction
Gender Pearson Correlation	1	.335**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	125	125
Job Satisfaction Pearson Correlation	.335**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	125	125

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### Interpretation

The correlation analysis between gender and job satisfaction among tea estate workers in Wayanad shows a moderate positive relationship (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.335). The p-value (0.000) is significant at the 0.01 level, meaning the correlation is statistically meaningful. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ), confirming a significant relationship between gender and job satisfaction.

#### Chi-Square Test

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant relationship between monthly income and satisfaction with salary and benefits among tea estate workers in Wayanad.

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): There is a significant relationship between monthly income and satisfaction with salary and benefits among tea estate workers in Wayanad.

**Table 3. Monthly Income \* Satisfaction with Salary and Benefits**

		Satisfaction with Salary and Benefits				Total
		Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	
Monthly Income	Less than 5000	12	6	5	5	28
	5000-10000	22	16	3	0	41
	10001-15000	12	12	0	3	27
	15001-20000	5	9	1	0	15
	Above 20,000	11	3	0	0	14
Total		62	46	9	8	125

### Chi Square Test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.616 <sup>a</sup>	12	.006
Likelihood Ratio	31.536	12	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.055	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	125		

### Interpretation

The Chi-Square test indicates a significant relationship between monthly income and satisfaction with salary and benefits among tea estate workers in Wayanad ( $\chi^2 = 27.616$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, confirming that higher income is associated with greater satisfaction.

### FINDINGS

- The workforce in Wayanad's tea estates is predominantly young, with 24.8% of workers in the 25-35 years age group, followed by 21.6% under 25 years, indicating a mix of experience levels.
- Males constitute 55.2% of the workforce, while females represent 42.4%, showing significant female participation in the tea estates.
- A majority of workers are married (56.8%), suggesting that family responsibilities may influence job satisfaction.



- A notable portion of workers (26.4%) have only primary education, potentially limiting their career advancement opportunities.
- Approximately 27.2% of workers have 1-5 years of experience, while 18.4% have over 15 years, reflecting a blend of new and experienced employees.
- Tea pluckers form the largest group (41.6%), followed by factory workers (30.4%), highlighting the labor-intensive nature of tea estates.
- Most employees earn between ₹5,000 - ₹10,000 per month (32.8%), while only 9.6% earn above ₹20,000, indicating relatively low wages.
- Key factors affecting job satisfaction include salary, job security, and working conditions.
- The correlation analysis reveals a moderate positive relationship ( $r = 0.335$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) between gender and job satisfaction, confirming a statistically significant impact and leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) in favor of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ).
- The Chi-Square test shows a significant relationship ( $\chi^2 = 27.616$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ) between monthly income and satisfaction with salary and benefits, suggesting that higher-income groups report greater satisfaction, while lower-income groups tend to be more dissatisfied.

## SUGGESTIONS

To improve job satisfaction, employers in Wayanad's tea estates should consider raising wages, especially for lower-income employees. Offering better incentives, transparent salary structures, and career advancement opportunities can boost motivation and reduce dissatisfaction. Additionally, enhancing workplace safety and facilities will further improve overall employee well-being and satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

The study on job contentment and work environment of tea estate workers in Wayanad offers important information on different factors influencing workforce happiness, like remunerations, job security, benefits, working environment, and management relationships. Findings indicate that whereas certain employees are satisfied, many other workers experience problems like low remunerations, delayed salary payments, deficiency of welfare schemes, and insufficient career development prospects. Many of the workers believe that their wages are not commensurate with the work that is required of them, and thus, they are not satisfied and are financially insecure. The problems of workplace health and safety, sanitation, and access to quick medical attention were also cited as requiring quick remedies. While workers appreciate work security and social belongingness within the estate, they are asking for better working conditions, management-employee communication, and welfare benefits. Workload unevenness and stress continue to be an issue, highlighting better work allocation and psychological support. The research also highlights the significance of skill improvement programs for productivity enhancement and career development. Strengthening grievance redressal and communication mechanisms will help to enhance employee relations and overall job satisfaction.

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